# Burroughs

# As a Nature Essayist

by Bernice Elizabeth Jones

*1908*

Submitted to the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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# Burroughs As a Nature Essayist

Mr. Burroughs has written a book of verse and one of religious discussions, and nearly as many volumes of literary criticism as he has of nature essays. But all that he has written has been done from the point of view of the naturalist and, whatever the subject, under Burroughs's treatment it has become redolent of open air and fresh soil. Moreover, a little more than half of his work consists of essays that are strictly nature essays; studies of bird and flower, forest and stream, in which the facts and observations are, as their recorder hopes, "informed with meaning" by the creative touch of the imagination.[1] In the volumes of his nature essays, then, one may expect to find the truest expression of the literary characteristics of Burroughs and the

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[1] Riverby, p. 213

reasons for his wide popularity.[1]

The distinctive qualities of these essays are two: rare pictorial effect and dogmatic assertiveness, occurring together though not combined. The two qualities may be found, from the beginning of Burroughs's literary career, side by side in the same essay. Usually, however, a paper is clearly of one kind or the other. Indeed, so separately do these characteristics appear in Burroughs's out-of-door studies that his work in that field falls pretty clearly into two sharply defined periods, with a distinct break between them. To the first period belongs most of his work from 1865 to the closing years of the century. This may be designated Burroughs's poetic period. The second period proper dates from December 1899 or, a little more positively, early in 1900.

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[1] In 1887, 16 years after the first publication of the first vol. of Burroughs's nature essays, Wake Robin, it was in its third edition.
1887. Winter Sunshine, 2nd vol. 1876, was in its 12th ed.
1887 Pepacton 5th vol. 1881 " " " 7th ed.
see also appendix A.

The latest contribution to the body of this work is in the "Outlook" for today, May 2, 1908. This must be called Burroughs's period of controversy and diatribe.

From childhood, Mr. Burroughs says, he was familiar with the homely facts of farm life, and with "everything that smacked of, and led to, the open air and its exhilirations."[1] In 1863, when he visited the Adirondacks, he was a few months past his twenty-sixth birthday, and in the first flush of his ornithological studies.[2] At about that time, to break the spell of Emerson's influence and get upon ground of his own, he turned from the essays on "Genius" and "Revolutions", which he had been contributing to some of the New York papers, and began to write on out door themes.[3] The earliest of these, which were published in the "New York Leader" and gained their author some little favorable notice, have not been

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[1] National Cyclopedia of American Biography.

[2] Wake Robin, p 85

[3] Indoor Studies. p 243

made a part of Burroughs's published works.

"With the Birds", the earliest of Burroughs ventures as a nature essays retained as a permanent part of his works, was published in the Atlantic Monthly for May 1865. In this paper, an affectionate account of the annual migrations of his feathered friends, the author shows himself as the poet Burroughs. There is no sound of wrangling in its pages. The essay begins in a personal and reflective vein, and contains at intervals throughout, bits of speculative questioning and interpretative suggestion. The author wonders what will be the final upshot of the golden-winged woodpecker's taking to the habits of robins and finches. "Will his taking to the ground and his pedestrian feats result in lengthening his legs, his feeding upon berries and grains subdue his tints and soften his voice, and his associating with Robin put a song into his heart?"[1]

Burroughs speaks of his feeling that the

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[1] At. 15: p. 18, Wake Robin, p. 20.

so describing thicket and meadow that the reader seems to himself to be drawn out to them, or even to have their breezes and bird sounds brought in at his window to him. Keeping himself out of the foreground, Burroughs seems, with an Ariel-like power, to set delectable things in concrete form before his reader.

Such figurative comparisons as Burroughs makes are always simple analogies, but fresh and distinctive. They are used for helpful illustration, not for ornamentation. He says of the flowers of the climbing fumitory: "They are slightly heart-shaped, and when examined closely look like little pockets of crumpled silk --- shirred up at the bottom."[1] And of a bed of fringed polygala: "It was as if a flock of small rose-purple butterflies had alighted there on the ground before us."[2]

In 1871 "With the Birds," shorn of its particularly personal opening paragraphs, including the mystic passage; modified slightly in some of its phrases to be more restrained and scientific in tone; and with its title changed to "The Return of the Birds"; appeared as the first chapter in Wake Robin, Bur-

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1 Riverby, p. 5.

2 " p. 21

roughs's first volume of nature essays.

In style this first essay,-like many of the less finished among those that have followed it, even down to some of the most recent- produces at times a jerky, disjointed effect. The paragraphs tend to be fragmentary and isolated, the sentences to be technically incoherent. Thoreau's style is seldom, even in the Journals, equally fragmentary in character.

In his next essay, "The Snow Walkers," Burroughs produced, perhaps without himself realizing the difference, a much more artistic familiar essay than the first. In it, the gaps between sentences and between paragraphs are bridged over, and the whole essay is cast in a better rounded form than its predecessor. The personal note, struck in the opening sentence, is maintained throughout the piece The record of facts observed is, in this essay, less full than in the former one; and it is more often made to be only of incidental importance. Not so many pictures are objectively presented as in "The Return of the Birds", but a good many picture impressions are produced as background for the author's thoughts. The paper is a personal expression of Burroughs's delight in the

snow-covered landscape, and a record of some of his reflections upon it. Here, as is not the case in "The Return of the Birds", observations are recorded only as they affected the author's being; quickening his mind and heart, giving interpretative suggestion, or contributing to his esthetic sense. Still the total effect is pictorial rather than reflective.

In these two essays are to be found all the main features of Burroughs's nature essays. Even the dogmatism is foreshadowed in one place. Poetic feeling is everywhere apparent, but never intense. No rhapsodies occur; but there is plentifully evident, keen delight in the things observed; in part, simply for their beauty, but mainly for their wondrousness. In style, the essays are explicit rather than suggestive; and in descriptive detail, full and accurate, but not scientific, either in kind or in terminology. They are full of substance; a compact foundation of facts, lighted up with poetic appreciation, and surmounted by a slight superstructure of fancy. In none of them does Burroughs seem to look much for the deeper relations and inner meanings of things. Occasionally he approaches rich poetic fields, with an imaginative scope that suggests John Muir. But less often than Muir

does he theorize about them. He presents the conception: "Here upon this lower silurnian, the earth that saw and nourished the great monsters and dragons, was growing the delicate blue-grass. It had taken all these millions upon millions of years to prepare the way for this little plant to grow to perfection."[1] ~~Of~~ Thoughts of much less grandeur [would have] furnished Thoreau food for lengthy reflections. Burroughs leaves this, and such others as he has, similar to it, undeveloped. He does not concern himself with shaping his ore into vessels either to honor or to dishonor; he is content to hand it out as nuggets which the reader may use as he pleases. I have found a single marked exception to this. It occurs in Burroughs's account of his visit to Mammoth Cave: "Is not the whole secret of life to pitch our voices in the right key? Responses come from the very rocks when we do so."[2]

Of humor I find but few traces in Burroughs, and the few examples that there are, are clumsy. In describing the ragweed plant he says: its

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[1] Riverby. p. 224

[2] " p 248

name in the botany is Ambrosia, food of the gods. It must be the foods of the gods if of anything, for, so far as I have observed, nothing terrestrial eats it, not even billy-goats."[1] In another place: "They [some vagabond cattle] ran their long tongues under the tent, and, tasting something savory, hooked out John Stuart Mill's 'Essays on Religion,' - - - but its logic was too tough for them."[2] But, though not a successful humorist, Burroughs's work shows him always a uniformly cheery man, one disposed to take life serenely as it comes.

The early associations of Burroughs were not of a bookish kind and he has never learned to make his quotations part of the very body of his thought. The references in Wake Robin are almost all to the writings of Audubon and other naturalists. After 1875, lines from literature become more frequent in his pages. The names of Vergil and Theocritus, Arnold and Rossetti, Montaigne and ~~St. Pierre~~ Goethe, Carlyle, Burroughs and Bourgueniff, as well as his favorites, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Whitman appear in the nature essays.

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[1] Pepacton, p. 226

[2] Riverby, pp. 59-60

"The Fox", in Winter Sunshine, has about three pages of matter evidently read especially to be used in that paper. "Our Rural Divinity" might almost have been written by an indoors naturalist.

"Birds and Birds," is a comparison between English and American birds, a study in comparative bird lore. Some of the papers in Fresh Fields, also, are on this subject; a subject not treated, I think, by any other out-door essayist.

"A Bed of Boughs" introduces a feature very rare in Burroughs. Its pages are the first of all that he has written in which people form a noticeable part of the scene. Burroughs is, in his literary practice, at least, much less sociable than Thoreau. Only three or four times in all the essays does he show interest in men by commenting on human institutions. On the rare occasions that he does do it, there is usually a touch of cynicism in the observation. In telling the story of a fish that swallows by inches fish many times its size he remarks: "Would it be hard to find something analogous to this in life, especially in American politics?"[1]

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[1] Riverby, p. 133

The work of Burroughs as a literary naturalist is unique. It bears hardly even a superficial resemblance to that of almost any other writer in the field. Olive Thorne Miller is, so far as I can find, the only other nature observer in modern American literature whose work is not either animal romance or largely subjective treatment of the world of out of doors. Burroughs is less like Thoreau in his nature essays than he is like Ruskin in "Love's Meinie." The one author whom he does strongly resemble, both in substance and in style, is Alexander Wilson the ornithologist.[1] In his statement of the writers who have influenced him, Burroughs does not name Wilson.[2] But in his citations of authority in "Wake Robin" he reveals an early acquaintance with Wilson.[3] Wilson wrote science with literary style; Burroughs has written poetical prose in a scientific manner.

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[1] This statement is based on an examination of only a limited amount of Wilson's work.

[2] Indoor Studies, "An Egotistical Chapter."

[3] In this first book of his essays, Burroughs quotes or refers to Audubon 15 times, Wilson 5 times, Nuttall and Thoreau each 4.

The results are so similar that one fairly familiar with Burroughs might well ascribe to him some of the descriptions from the American Ornithology. And Burrough's treatment of his material shows a purpose almost identical with that of Wilson, who avows ~~avows~~ as his object in writing his great work: "Amusement, blended with instruction, the correction of numerous errors, which have been introduced into this part of our country--- and a wish to draw the attention of my fellow-citizens, occasionally, from the discordant jarrings of politics to a contemplation of the grandeur, harmony, and wonderful variety of nature."[1]

The less pleasing side of Burroughs's character has been thrown into relief by his writings of the last few years. In twenty-eight of the thirty-six naturalist essays that Burroughs has had in the literary magazines since December 1899, he has shown himself a high-handed controversialist. Do one flush from reading some of

[1] Review in Blackwood's Magazine 19:664

his prose idylls such as "The Pastoral Bees", "Birds-Nesting", or "Strawberries," it seems that it must be a transformed Burroughs that is the author of the current diatribes on "Fake Natural History." But Burroughs has always had a tendency to dogmatize, and the Seton-Long controversy is not the first in which he has engaged. The affair of "Nature and the Poets" belongs strictly, to the history of Burroughs as a literary critic. But it is so intimately connected with the story of the development of his disputatious period that it seems to claim a place here also.

In Scribner's Monthly for December 1879, Burroughs had an article on "Nature and the Poets; in which he said "The poets are usually the best naturalists; - - - - yet it is curious to note how our singers sometimes trip in their dealings with nature." He then applied himself to pointing out their discrepancies and setting them right. The essay is a plea for true local color and characterizing detail in literature; but it is

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Scribner's Monthly 19:

personal in its strictures, and carping in tone. It is an arraignment of most of the prominent American poets for sounding false notes in their handling of natural history.

Higginson took occasion to reply to this onset of Burroughs.[1] Years before, he had seen his own observation set up for ridicule in an essays of Burroughs's.[2] He had seen naturalists of established reputation meted the same treatment. Even Audubon had not been suffered to escape a portion of mingled correction and commendation. On one occasion Burroughs had said of him: "Again he says that the song of the Blue-grosbeak resembles the Bobolink's; which it does about as much as the color of the two birds resembles each other; one is black and white and the other is blue. - - - Yet considering the extent of Audubon's work, the wonder is that the errors are so few. I can, at this moment, recall but one observation of his, the contrary of which I have proved to be true."[3] This was

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[1] Atlantic, March 1880

[2] Wake Robin pp 60-61 (published Ct: 17:672-84)

[3] " "

the summer of 1869; just six years after Burroughs he was, according to his own statement "in the first flush of his ornithological studies."

No doubt, therefore, Higginson welcomed the opportunity to call a halt on this upstart critic. He quoted entries from his own diary kept for four years in the neighborhood of Cambridge and from the botanist Gray showing that Lowell had his floral calendar correct for his locality when he made the dandelion bloom with the buttercup and the clover, and that Burroughs was himself "out of season" in his corrective statement.' Other refutations he made in similar fashion.

When, in the next year, "Nature and the Poets" appeared in book form, Burroughs had somewhat modified some of the statements refuted. But the modifications made were all trivial and inconspicuous, and of slight corrective force.

Burroughs made his next critical attack exceedingly direct and personal. In 1903, in an article in the Atlantic entitled "Real and Sham Natural History", after naming those writers who have met his approval in the field of nature

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' Atl: 45

literature, he goes on to say "only the last two writers [Seton and Long] seem to seek to profit by the popular love for the sensational and the improbable. But in Mr. Thompson Seton's Wild Animals I Have Known, and in the recent book of his awkward imitator the Rev. Wm. J. Long, . . . the line [between fact and fiction] is repeatedly crossed." Are we to believe that Mr. Thompson Seton, in his few years of roaming in the West, has penetrated further into the secrets of animal life than all the observers who have gone before him? . . . Take his story of the crow - Silver Spot, . . . how much of the real natural history of the crow is there? According to my own observations of more than half a century, there is very little. . . . That these natural leaders among the fowls of the air ever appear, I have no evidence."[1]

Long, with his idea of a school of the woods, gets the brunt of the attack. Burroughs makes the positive assertion that: "there is nothing in the dealings of animals with their young that in the remotest way suggests human instruction and discipline. The young

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[1] Ct. 91: 296-301

of all wild creatures do instinctively what their parents do and did. They do not have to be taught; they are taught by nature from the start."[1] These two questions: Can animals think? and Do they teach their young?, have ~~been~~ ever since that time been almost constantly disputed by Burroughs in a sort of printed monologue.

Long replied ~~to~~ to the article, claiming individuality in some degree for every animal and citing seemingly good authorities as bearing out with their observations, his own statements and those of Mr. Seton.[2]

Burroughs continued the matter thus begun in a series of articles in the Century Magazine for the next year, 1904. Since that time he carried on the discussion in occasional articles in various periodicals, reiterating and elaborating his enunciations. He sees in the sentimental view of animal life, with its misinterpretations, an ethical and moral danger, a kind of yellow journalism.[3] In the original attack he affirms

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[1] Ct. 91: 308

[2] N. Am. 176: 688-98

[3] Cent. 67: 309

his willingness to allow animal romances to be written, provided they be not palmed off on the innocent public as fact. His main objection to Seton is that he "says in capital letters that his stories are true;..." it is this emphatic assertion that makes the judicious grieve."[1] He urges that: "No pleasure to the reader, no moral inculcated, can justify the dissemination of false notions of nature, or of anything else."[2]

It will be interesting to turn back for a few minutes to trace chronologically the development of Burroughs's views on the subject of animal intelligence. In the period prior to 1900 he treats that particular matter only incidentally here and there. He holds to the general rule that "Nature's strong and striking effects are best rendered by closest fidelity to her,"[3] and insists that observers should be careful to see straight and to avoid hasty conclusions. But he seldom says anything that suggests raising questions of animal psychology

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[1] Ct. 91: 298-99

[2] Ct. 91: 305-

[3] Pepacton p. 117

When he does express his idea of the matter, it is in accord with popular opinion. In the course of his first period of work, Burroughs commits himself to everything for which he now censures Seton and Long. In the essay of 1864 he has: "The partridge is undoubtedly acquainted with the same process of reasoning."[1] In an essay written midway in the artistic stage of his career, there is a similar passage: "The squirrel that had taken all this pains had evidently reasoned with himself thus, 'Now these are extremely fine chestnuts, and I want them; if I wait till the burs open on the tree the crows and jays will be sure to carry off a great many of the nuts before they fall; - - - to say nothing of the boys and the pigs, - - - I will cut off the burs when they have matured and a few days of this dry October weather will cause every one of them to open on the ground.' - - - It is an interesting inquiry how the squirrel knew. - - - Perhaps he did not know but thought the experiment worth trying."[2] Again in the same paper[x]: "I suspect that

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[1] Wake Robin. p. 26

[2] Pepacton. p. 149

[x] " p. 180

he [the dog] revolved the subject in his mind while he revolved the great wheel of the churning machine - - - for the next time he showed himself a strategist."[1]

In Riverby, published only five years before the paper on "The Art of Seeing Things," the first of the present disputative series, and only nine years before the Seton-Long ~~controversy~~, Burroughs has one or two statements really very entertaining in the light of his present position. He tells the story of a dog who "seemed to say to himself, on seeing us, 'There come both of them now, just as I have been hoping they would; now, while they are away, I will run quickly over and know what they have got that a dog can eat'." Something in the cur's manner suggesting to the owners of the camp the object of his hurried departure, they followed him back and surprised him in his pillaging. When they again met him at the house next day, he could not look them in the face, but sneaked off, utterly crest fallen. It was "a clear case of reasoning on the part

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[1] Riverby, p. 180

of the dog, and afterward a clear case of a sense of guilt from wrong doing. The dog, Mr. Burroughs concludes, "will probably be a man before any other animal." Finally, there is a reflection on a partridge and her brood: "How well her young ones are disciplined always to take their cue from her! Not one will stir until she gives the signal."[2]

The first note of the change in attitude, the first enunciation, as it were, of a naturalist fiat, came as early as 1877. In one of the essays belonging to that year Burroughs says: "There is a great deal of speculation in the eye of an animal, but very little science."[3] But it is not until the beginning of the new century that he begins to argue the question, or even to make it of any prominence in his writings. Not until after 1900, can he be said to have taken any particular stand in the matter. Since then he has harped on it almost con-

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1 Riverby, pp 60-61

2 Riverby, p. 264

3 Birds and Poets, p. 60

stantly. In his preface to Ways of Nature, published in 1905, Burroughs ascribes the change to his having been led, by the gross exaggerations and misrepresentations of everyday wild life by late nature writers, to examine the whole subject of animal life and instinct in a way that he had never done before.

In February 1904, Burroughs declared: "They [animals] do not accumulate a store of knowledge any more than they do a store of riches. A store of knowledge is impossible without language."[1] He admits that ~~the~~ "To what extent animals reason - - - is a much debated question among animal psychologists"[2] but he insists that the animal knows only what necessity taught its progenitors, and that it knows that only as a spontaneous impulse to do certain things.[3]

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At the end of the article, Burroughs quotes from a letter from President Roosevelt a statement of his belief that on certain occasions animals do show a conscious attempt at teaching their young. Burroughs says that he thinks that the President will agree with him that imitation is the key to the whole matter.

1 Cent. 67: 510
2 id 514
3 id 516

In March of that year, Burroughs further defined his position by announcing his conviction that there is practically no such thing as individuality in animals. That every animal has some degree of individuality ~~had been~~ was a basic contention with Long in his reply to "Real and Sham Natural History." In the March article, Burroughs announced also that by certain things in animal life he was led "to suspect that animals have some means of communication with one another, especially the gregarious animals, that is quite independent of what we mean by language. It is like an interchange or blending of subconscious states, and may be analogous to telepathy among human beings."[1] This theory Burroughs prefers to the notion of leaders of the flock or herd held by Seton. By this time Burroughs had largely given over referring to the biologists for verification of his statements.

In the August number of the series of three articles, Burroughs makes no new enunciation of particular importance. He merely states the conclusion that "animals are wise as nature is

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[1] Cent 67:776

wise; that a "universal or cosmic intelligence" makes up by far the greater part of what they know. "The plant is wise in all ways to reproduce and perpetuate itself."[1] Perhaps it is with the wish to retract his own statement made ten years before in Riverby, that he says in this essay "almost anything may be affirmed of dogs, for they are half human, yet I doubt if even dogs experience the feeling of shame or guilt or revenge that we so often ascribe to them."[2] Finally, to be sure that the enemy is thoroughly vanquished – a large part of the previous paper had been obviously directed at Mr. Long – and the field cleared, Burroughs ends the article thus: "A Frenchman has published a book, which has been translated into English, on the Industries of Animals. Some of these Frenchmen could give points even to our Modern School of Nature Study."[3]

In subsequent essays, Burroughs has definitely carried his naturalist dicta one step further, and his assumptions of authority, at least two.

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[1] Cent. 68:5-61

[2] id

[3] id 5-63

In an article published December 1907, he says: "All the eminent comparative psychologists, so far as I know them, have reached the conclusion that animals do not reason.... Why impute reason to an animal if its behavior can be explained on the theory of instinct?"[1] "Darwin tried hard to convince himself that animals do at times reason in a rudimentary way: but Darwin--- was a much greater naturalist than psychologist.--- The slow transformations in nature amount to metamorphoses."[2] In his latest article, published in the Outlook for May 2, 1908, he ~~says~~ asks in his debating of the question of animal instinct: "Is not man's wisdom also older than himself?"[3] and he says in his discussion of it "I do not think the position is tenable which Jordan and Kellogg take in their work entitled "Evolution and Animal Life," namely that it is a power of choice that distinguishes reason from instinct. A hunted animal may take this course or that without any act of reflec-

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1 Outlook 87: 509

2 " id

3 " 89: 36

tion or reasoning as to which may prove the more advantageous."[1] This over weening confidence shown by Burroughs in his own biological judgments suggests that perhaps Mr. Long is not unjust to the spirit of Burroughs when he recalls his harsh criticism of Maurice Thompson. . . . anent the classics," and inquires, "But how shall a man criticise the classics who does not read them?"[2] One is led to wonder how much of fakirism and of seeking to profit by the "popular love for the sensational" actuates the critical part of Burroughs's work.

In estimating the value of Burroughs's work, I am inclined to dispose of this less pleasing side, first. His naturalist criticism has, perhaps, acted as a check to the strong modern tendency to humanize the animals, in American literature. If he has done this he has rendered a service to art, for some of the animal romances of the last few years have been so overdrawn as to be fairly grotesque. If the statement of a recent comparative psychologist is sound, that the "so-called popular animal psychology" has

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[1] Outlook 67: 37

[2] North American 176: 698

as its "practical consequence" --- the demoralization and brutalization of man";[1] then Burroughs has rendered a service to morals as well, by setting people to thinking by virtue of his dissent.

By keeping the animal before the public eye, he has probably often gained for it a consideration that it would otherwise have missed.

By emphasizing the ultimate helplessness of the animal against the power of man's mind, he may well have deepened man's sense of responsibility toward the animals, thus laying the foundations for a more systematic care for them than the sentimental treatment might have brought about. This last, if really in Burroughs's plan, may be regarded as a manifestation of the large poetic vision of the Muir type, the kind that can discover the harmonies of the universe. But I believe that here, as elsewhere, Burroughs pauses on the threshold. He leads his reader through regions full of poetic suggestion, without himself thinking of looking beyond the material and the present.

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[1] Animal Psychology, Eric Wasman; p. 198

Muir cannot contemplate a dwindling forest without beholding it back in its primeval luxuriance, and seeing it ahead in its impending waste. Burroughs sees everything within range of a keen mortal vision; in his nature essays, he attempts little beyond that.

Indeed, it is probably to his concreteness and freedom from mysticism that Burroughs's equalling, and even surpassing Thoreau, in popularity is largely due. In considering these two literary naturalists together I am led to ~~make~~ draw the comparison made by Higginson between the red-eyed vireo and the thrush, where he says: "The Red-eyed Flycatcher --- seems a sort of piano adaptation, popularized for the million, of the rich notes of the Thrushes.--Yet the birds which most endear summer are not necessarily the finest performers."[1] This comparison is not quite fair to Burroughs, for he does not repeat or imitate Thoreau, yet he is after all somewhat a piano adaptation of post-naturalism, set to the taste of the million.

Other reasons for Burroughs's high place are these. He has a considerable body of material

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[1] Out-door Studies, p. 15-6

in a field obt, but never overworked. The literary treatment of nature dates back in the literature of America to the writings of William Wood and John Josselyn ~~in the~~ who have bits of it in their work in the seventeenth century. But Burroughs's eleven volumes and more of out-of-door literature have never been approximated in amount by anyone writing on that subject except Thoreau and Audubon. And volumes of Audubon are not readily accessible, even if they offered pure literature.

There is, I think, a tendency to regard Burroughs as the founder, or at least the leader, of a school of nature writers. But, while Thompson Seton has an unmistakable company of imitators, Stillman is the only one that I can find to set down as a probable follower of Burroughs. Burroughs, probably, is less readily imitatable than Seton. Burroughs seems not even to have contributed much that is new in the way of nature subjects for literary treatment. His comparative study of English and American birds is probably unique, but every other subject that he treats in his artistic way may be found introduced, at least in the pages of Thoreau or Higginson. Burroughs suggests

in one of his papers that "We can boast a greater assortment of toads and frogs in this country than can any other land. In Europe it would certainly have made an impression upon the literature."[1] And he gives a good deal of attention to toads and hylas. But so does Thoreau. And Josselyn records, as early as 1672, that there are in New England toads of two sorts," one that is speckled with white, and another of a dark earthy color; there is of them that will climb up into trees and sit croaking there."[2] Burroughs has not added much of fact to Josselyn's observation.

The nature essays of Burroughs perhaps owe their popularity in part to the fact that they are satisfying to the prevalent modern thirst for accumulation, for making even one's pleasures yield substantial returns. They are full of information related to science, which is put in usable form. "In Nature and the Poets," Burroughs criticises Bryant's "Fringed Gentian" as follows: "if one were to go botanizing and take Bryant's poem for a guide he would not bring home

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[1] Paperton, p. 163

[2] New England's Rarities Discovered, in Coll. of Am. Lit. p. 430

any fringed gentians with him."[1] Burroughs gives definite, practical directions in the guise of literature. One might safely expect to find birds if depending on one of Burroughs's graphic descriptions for guidance. Burroughs tells explicitly how to study ornithology, and how to test nature literature.

Moreover, the material that he gives is selected with a poet's discrimination and presented with considerable literary charm. And he offers his essays under titles of especial attractiveness. Who would not wish to read of "Speckled Trout", a "Rural Divinity", "a Bird Medley", or "A Spring Relish"? In this matter of choosing titles, Burroughs is particularly felicitous. The names of his essays are perpetual invitations.

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[1] Pepacton. p. 107

# Appendix A.

According to the American and English catalogues, and the Publishers' Annual Trade Lists there have been the editions of Burroughs published since 1894, as follows:

1895- Works. 9 vol. Boston & N. Y. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.
1896. Birds and Bees. " " " "
1896 Bunch of Herbs. " " "
1896 Whitman, " " " "
1896 Year in the Fields, " " "
1899 Winter Sunshine, Cambridge classics " "
1900 Light of Day. " "
1900 Squirrels and Other Fur Bearers, " "
1901 Year in the Fields, new ed. " "
1902 Literary Values, " "
1902 John James Audubon, - In Beacon Biographies " "
1903 Works - new ed. 11 vol. " "
1904 Far and Near, uniform with Riverside ed. " "
1904 Literary Values, " " " " " "
1905- Ways of Nature, " " " "
1906 Works, new 16mo ed. 14 vol. " "
1906 Bird and Bough. (poems) " "
1908 Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt " "
May 1908 Works. new Riverby ed. announced as ready for the market. in literary section of N. Y. Times

Appendix A - (cont)

ntes of Burroughs offered by English publishers:
onstable & Co - the London agents of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

Far and Near, Crown 8vo 5-s net.

Ways of Nature,

Literary Values,

Walt Whitman,

Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt.

Bird and Bough.

Murray: Burroughs's account of the Harriman Alaska expedition.

Doubleday:

Burroughs, Muir, and others - "Alaska, its nature, bird and animal life. 2 vol. N.Y. & London. 1901

Smith and E.: (pirates?) Year in the Fields. Jan 97.

Gay and B: Literary Values. (pirates?) Mar '03

# Appendix B.

Chronological list of Burroughs's early essays as they appeared in the literary magazines:
(This list is complete, so far as the resources of our library permit me to test it. Some few of the collected essays seem not to have appeared first in a periodical.)

May 1865. "With the Birds," At. 15: 513-28

1866 "Walt Whitman and his Drum Taps" Galaxy II 604-8

1866 "Snow Walkers," At. 17: 302-10

1866 "In the Hemlocks At. 17: 672-84.

1868 "Before Genius," Galaxy 5: 421-6

1869 "Birds' Nests," At. 23: 701

1869 "Spring in Washington" At. 23: 513-80

1869 "Birch Browsings," At. 24: 14

1870 "Speckled Trout" At. 26: 429

1873 "Exhilirations of the Road," Galaxy 8: 809

1873 "The Bluebird" Scribner's Monthly 6: 421

1873 "From London to New York" Galaxy, 15: 188

1873 "Birds of the Poets," Scribner's Monthly 6: 565-

1874 "Mellow England" " " 8: 560

1874 "J. T. Trowbridge" " " 9: 32

1875 "House Building" " " 11: 333

1876 "A Word or Two on Emerson," Galaxy, 21: 234-9

and 243-5-9.

1876 "What Makes the Poet?" " 22: 565-

1876 "A Bird Medley" Scribner's Monthly 12: 479

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1876 "A Word or Two on Emerson," Galaxy, 21: 234-9

and 243-5-9.

1876 "What Makes the Poet?" " 22: 505-

1876 "A Bird Medley" Scribner's Monthly 12: 479